

DOCUMENTS I

[About Czech literary development in the 1960s] Briefly, if such views in the sphere of aesthetics and poetics mostly negated socialist literature and sided uncritically with the avant-garde, existentialism, anti-novel, theatre of the absurd, and with the concept of the so-called open work, or with the literary theories of structuralism, formalism, information theory, and others, it does not mean that Marxist literary theory should only polemicise with these phenomena, and not to ask questions about their rational nature. In the area of ideology and worldview, these approaches negated Marxism-Leninism, they promoted the so-called young Marx, but primarily abstract, ahistorical, and irrational concepts of humankind and of history, bourgeois philosophical anthropology, and therefore, it was no coincidence that these views, whether openly or covertly, denied the aspect of class and partisanship, the difference between proletarian and bourgeois humanism, and instead, claimed one indivisible humanism.

Valér Petko, 1981. 'O uplatňování hľadiska straníckosti' [Application of the Partisan Perspective], *Slovenská literatúra*, 28, 526–36 (p. 530). In the English translation, I did not quite manage what the author did in Slovak: to create a 123-word-long sentence.

A polemics with revisionist and right-wing-opportunist views is not self-serving. Quite the contrary, it is still acute, it is closely connected with the current escalation of the international class and ideological struggle, with contemporary international revisionism and right-wing opportunism, and it is an integral part of an offensive development of theory and practice of Real Socialism.

Valér Petko, 1981. 'O uplatňování hľadiska straníckosti' [Application of the Partisan Perspective], *Slovenská literatúra*, 28, 526–36 (p. 535).

After the defeat of revisionism and right-wing opportunism [that is, after 1968], literature and its evaluation in criticism and theoretical research develop on rejuvenated Marxist-Leninist principles of the politics of the Party.

František Miko, 1981. 'Obnova princípov marxizmu-leninizmu v literárnej vede a kritike' [The Restoration of Marx-Leninist Principles in Literary Theory and Criticism], *Slovenská literatúra*, 28, 536–42 (p. 540).

If we project before our eyes inter-war, post-February [that is, post-February 1948], and today's literature, we cannot miss the changes in the concretisation of the relationship between literature and a working person on all levels at which this relationship is realised in literature: in the theme, plot, approach, or selection of the protagonist, in literary means of expression. [...] At the stage of building a developed socialist society, the Party defines the mission of literature in relation to the formation of new, socialist personality. Literature is to help shape the social human, advocated by Marx, a human being, who with his/her work and abilities decides about his/her life and about the life of society.

Hana Hrzalová, 1981. 'Česká a slovenská socialistická literatúra a literárni věda po XVI. sjezdu KSČ' [Czech and Slovak Socialist Literature and Literary Theory after the XVIth Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], *Slovenská literatúra*, 28, 490–96 (pp. 491–92).

3. CONSIDERING IDEOLOGY, DISCOURSE AND GENDER THEORIES IN THE CZECH CONTEXT

In my readings in discourse theory, the theory of ideology, and gender theory, I began to question certain terms and concepts with respect to their unreserved applicability to the pre-1989 Czech Republic. Literary theory, with the exception of some prescriptive Lukácsian Marxism, was not possible to practice; gender theory and feminist activism were (and are) virtually non-existent. The issue then is what these absences do to textual practice (in this case, literary, non-literary and visual texts written in the decade prior to the 1989 changeover), since it is reasonable to expect that neither the authors nor the readers would have been aware of contemporary Western social and cultural discussions. Or, to be more precise: what happens if we try to read those texts through the lenses of discourse theory, the theory of ideology, and gender theory?

In this chapter, I will engage with some of the difficulties presented by the import of these theoretical models into the cultural and social environment of pre-1989 Czech Republic. I will discuss the concept of ideology in relation to state socialism, and argue for the co-existence of ideology and discourse within one theoretical framework. Then I will problematise the concept of patriarchal representations of femininity in the light of the state-socialist ideology. Finally, I will illustrate elements of this ideological/discursive model in a Czech 'best-reader' novel *Z neznámých důvodů* (*For Unknown Reasons*; Frýbová 1993, first published 1988).

As we have seen, the concepts of ideology and discourse are often associated with different theoretical traditions, although there have also been tendencies to treat them within one model.¹ For the purposes of my research, I see a need for both terms, but also the need to distinguish between them. The main arguments for the use of the term 'ideology' when speaking about state socialism are the strongly institutional character of that ideology and the fact the political leaders themselves were using the word to refer to it. Slavoj Žižek points out that for both Marx's and Althusser's work on Ideological State Apparatuses 'ideology was always of the state' (Žižek 1994, 19). He elaborates on this proposition in relation to the state-socialist experience: 'Socialism was perceived as the rule of "ideological" oppression and indoctrination, whereas the passage into democracy-capitalism was experienced as deliverance from the constraints of ideology' (ibid.). He relates the state-socialist system to 'organised imposition' and democracy-capitalism to 'spontaneity' and asserts that the tension between the two 'introduces a kind of reflective distance in the very heart of the notion of ideology: ideology is always, by definition, "ideology of ideology"' (ibid.). It follows that this

¹ For the examples of the former, see Macdonell (1986), Mills (1997), or Žižek (1994). The latter approach is used, for example, in (Eagleton 1991) and (Pearce and Stacey 1995). It needs to be pointed out, however, that even Eagleton runs into terminological difficulty when he needs to distinguish between 'a particular model of ideology—that of fascism and Stalinism' and 'the quite different discourses of liberal capitalism' (Eagleton 1991, 198; the latter emphasis my own). The editors of *Romance Revisited* acknowledge that for a number of critics the choice between *ideology* and *discourse* is 'simply indicative of [their] present theoretical affiliation: Marxist or Foucauldian' (Pearce and Stacey 1995, 28) rather than being a matter of radically different theoretical models. Nevertheless, they too are speaking about critical positions from within late capitalism.

perception of 'deliverance' from ideology was actually an 'ideological experience *par excellence*' (ibid.). I will take Žižek's distinction between state-socialist and capitalist modes of ideological power as a point of departure for my own theoretical model which relies more on discourse in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault 1990), than on ideology.

State-socialist ideology was guarded by a number of institutions. We can almost say that every ideological claim had its institution which made sure that that claim was put into practice: higher-education institutions had quotas for applicants of working class origin, each office would have a generous allocation of subsidised holiday packages for their employees and family members to make sure that workers got the deserved rest after work. Also, each office or enterprise had a department of 'special assignments', whose task was to monitor incidence of behaviour opposing the ideologically defined concept of socialist consciousness, such as neglect of the proper form of address ('comrade'), unreported—and therefore dangerous to public good—contacts with the West, or circulation of 'anti-state' pamphlets, in which case this department had to make sure that all employees sign counter-declarations.²

The list of ideological institutions could continue for pages, but already these few examples show one phenomenon specific to state socialism: for the most part, the ideology and its practice were far from covert. On the contrary, the ruling ideology and its institutions were clearly and openly defined, and the State itself used those words in a positive sense: there was 'ideological' leadership, culture had to have 'ideological' content, and each university or faculty would have a Dean for 'Ideology'. It is quite possible that with Western theoretical terminology at hand, we would now replace some of the 'ideology' words with 'philosophy' words.³ For example, we could speak about the philosophy of a novel or a piece of music. Nevertheless, we can argue that in the environment of state socialism, which claimed that its *ideology* was based in Marxist *philosophy*, the distinction between the use of 'philosophy' and 'ideology' may be rather difficult to make.⁴ Titles of articles published in official literary journals illustrate the politicisation of literature, with its confusion between ideology and philosophy: 'Employing the Criterion of Partisanship' (Petko 1981), 'The Restoration of Marx-

² Throughout this study, I will be using the term 'state-socialist ideology', rather than 'communist ideology'. In pre-1989 Czechoslovakia, the term communist ideology was used to refer to the set of egalitarian ideals formulated in environments such as education to define the goals of the political system and to motivate citizens to support that system. To distinguish between that and the actual ideological practices of the State during the state-socialist period, I use the term state-socialist ideology.

³ The Slovak linguist Braňo Hochel makes a similar observation in his witty commentary on the current Slovak language usage, while emphasising the overuse of certain words: "The words "ideology", "ideological" became magic spells, they were used everywhere like empty phrases, crutches, regardless of whether they belonged in a particular phrase, sentence, context or not. They were used without a consideration of their elementary semantics. [...] The word "ideology" has now taken the shape of "philosophy" and the word "súdruh" [i.e., comrade] the shape of "pán" [i.e., mister]. "Philosophy", "philosophical" have become magic spells, they have been used everywhere like empty phrases, crutches, regardless of whether they belong in a particular phrase, sentence, context or not. They have been used without a consideration of their elementary semantics' (Hochel 1991).

⁴ Terry Eagleton also points out the occurrence of the mutually interchangeable usage of the words 'ideology' and 'philosophy': 'It is true that people sometimes use the word ideology to refer to systematic belief in general, as when someone says that they abstain from eating meat "for practical rather than ideological reasons". "Ideology" here is more or less synonymous with the broad sense of the term "philosophy"' (Eagleton 1991, 5).

Leninist Principles in Literary Theory and Criticism' (Miko 1981), 'The Importance of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for the Foundation of Slovak and Czech Socialist Literatures' (Tomčík 1981), 'The Tasks of Literary Studies Following the XXVith CPSU Congress and the XVIth CPCS Congress' (Miko 1981).⁵

The account of the uses of ideology suggests that ideology in state socialism had a different location than it has in the framework of Western *theory* of ideology: it was located in concrete institutions, was defined differently, and was closely connected with everyday reality (individuals *knew* what was required by the ideology and how to behave). It worked to the letter as Terry Eagleton expressed it:

A successful ideology must work both practically and theoretically, and discover some way of linking these levels. It must extend from an elaborated system of thought to the minutiae of everyday life, from a scholarly treatise to a shout in the street.⁶ (Eagleton 1991, 48)

However, in speaking about resistance against the state-socialist ideology, it is difficult to use the word *ideology* in the same way since there were no organised structures and institutions of resistance on a mass scale.⁷ It is, therefore, reasonable to propose that given all these differences, it is possible to include both ideology and discourse in one theoretical model.

I have so far explained why it is important to keep the term ideology for state socialism, rather than to use the word *discourse* throughout: that there is a structural difference between state-socialist *ideology* and other systems of signification co-existing with it. It is only for the latter that I will use the term *discourse*. Eagleton (Eagleton 1991) theorises that ideologies are manifest in various discourses. In our case it is impossible to take the ideology, which is even by its perpetrators defined as such, and analyse how that ideology is manifest in *itself*, because the ideological-speak formed its own system of signification. That system was just that, 'the ideology', rather than an

⁵ CPSU—Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

CPCS—Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

A number of ideological articles was published in Czech and Slovak literary journals in 1981 at the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

⁶ The fact that the ideology worked more and more only on the 'surface', that is, that hardly anybody believed in it, but still behaved according to the ideological dictates, does not undermine the level of success of the ideology. Both Eagleton (1991) and Žižek (1991 and 1997) observe that this is a typical feature of an ideology.

⁷ It is sufficiently known that the Czech Republic had a semi-organised dissident movement. Some of the initiatives were the Charter 77, the VONS (the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted), or several *samizdat* publishing houses. However, these initiatives, while they may have been known to the wider public, concerned a relatively small group of people, which did not reach out to a large audience. Jiřina Šiklová, herself a Charter 77 signatory, gives precise numbers: 'The group of dissidents is numerically negligible. Czechoslovakia has a population of 15 million, but only 1,864 people signed Charter 77. And even in Summer 1989, with revolts taking place throughout the Warsaw Pact countries, only 39,000 people signed the appeal for democracy entitled "Some sentences..."' (Šiklová 1993, 77). I do not intend to diminish the contribution of these civic groups to the final disintegration of the system. Rather, I want to distinguish between this outspokenly dissident minority and the 'silent majority' together with the 'grey zone' in Jiřina Šiklová's terminology (Šiklová 1992, 183). The 'silent majority' included 'for the most part consumption oriented and politically uninterested' (*ibid.*) individuals. The term 'grey zone' applies to moral and educated professionals who were too timid to express their political views openly: and who were involved neither with the communist elites nor with the dissidents, although they often interacted with the latter group and even helped them. It is these latter two large groups which did not produce any organised structures of resistance, but participated in the production of informal resistant discourses, with which I am concerned.

'effect' in the Foucauldian sense; that is, an effect in which a re-distribution of power through a clash of multiple constituent discourses is possible.⁸ However, the *relationship* of individuals to that ideology / system of signification produced a number of 'effects' / discourses, and this is the distinction I wish to maintain.

Moreover, not only were these discourses produced by state-socialist ideology (that ideology was manifest in them), but they were co-formed by discourses circulating before state socialism and also by discourses penetrating into the state-socialist environment from the outside.⁹ From among the numerous discourses co-existing alongside the state-socialist ideology, I will focus my attention on two: patriarchal and consumer-capitalist. As defined in the Introduction, by *patriarchal* I mean a system of signification which ascribes higher value to 'male' and 'masculine' over 'female' and 'feminine'. I use the term *consumer capitalism* for reasons of convenience, although it may not exactly correspond to its use in economics or political science. The term, in my work, denotes a system of signification existing in opposition to the state-socialist ideology, that is, it was characterised, among others, by market economic relations, private property and representations of status and personal freedom through consumer goods. It is in line with Diane Macdonell's observation that 'formed as means of domination and resistance, ideologies are never simply free to set their own terms but are marked by what they are opposing' (Macdonell 1986, 34).

Before I proceed with a concrete piece of analysis, I have to further determine the properties of these two discourses and their relationship to the ideology of the state. Here I will draw on Raymond Williams's characterisation of the *workings* of ideology, as a constant struggle between 'the dominant', 'the emergent' and 'the residual':

The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. [...] By 'emergent' I mean [...] that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships are continually being created. (Williams 1977, 122–23)

Given the pre-state-socialist history of the Czech Republic as a country with the capitalist mode of production and accompanying social relationships, neither the consumer-capitalist nor the patriarchal discourses developed as entirely new social phenomena under state socialism or after. The consumer capitalist discourse originated in the previous discursive environment and it further developed in opposition to the *dominant* state-socialist ideology. It was therefore a resistant discourse which contained elements of both *residual* and *emergent*.

The emergent feature comes from the political division of the world during the Cold War period, which made capitalism the declared antagonist of state socialism. As Lubomír Štrougal, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia from 1970 to 1988, expressed it: 'This unbridgeable difference [...] reflects also the incompatibility of ethical values forming the political, ideological, cultural, as well as civic and legal content of two worlds, two social systems co-existing side by side' (quoted in Fidelius 1998, 167). As such, capitalism and its mode of life became the 'forbidden fruit', the admired and the

⁸ The Czech sociologist Možný (1991) develops a hypothesis that the effect of the state-socialist practice was accumulation of power by families, and that the 1989 changeover came about because the current system no longer suited these 'family clans'. This would contradict my concept of state-socialist ideology. However, his argument is based predominantly on anecdotal evidence and, to my knowledge, no study has been conducted so far to confirm Možný's hypothesis.

⁹ The penetration of discourses from the outside has to be allowed for, despite the fact that the state tried to prevent it as much as possible through various forms of censorship and using its repressive apparatus. It could never be absolute—if it were, the power of the ideology would be total and social change impossible.

wished-for by the common man and the common woman who resisted the enforced ideology. State socialism promoted so-called working class values, collectivism, materialist philosophy, and denial of consumerism, the antagonist, therefore, stood for almost anything that connoted 'bourgeois'—'Western', individualism, religious experience—and was only too often equated with the desire for consumer goods and consumer freedoms (the usual phrase used by the ideology in this context was 'Capitalist Gild', suggesting that it is all rotten under the polished surface, and socialist citizens should not desire the surface, but the 'real' values).¹⁰ It became the vague, but all-beautiful and all-solving Something, which can hardly be defined as an ideology, but rather, as an amorphous discourse. Below, I will discuss at some length a passage from *For Unknown Reasons*, in which the female character says that she engages a pensioner to clean her house. We can consider the use of hired labour as a certain form of resistance. It ran against the ideology of eradication of capitalist exploitation, that is—in the state-socialist vocabulary—of individuals purchasing the labour of other individuals.

Similarly, the patriarchal discourse also has the characteristics of the *residual*, because Czech society was more or less traditionally patriarchal before the arrival of state socialism. The establishment of state-socialist ideology was an enforced social change, without a sufficiently long period of growing resistance to the previous ideology. Patriarchal structures in the public sphere were disrupted (as opposed to being removed) practically overnight: the official ideology declared the emancipation of men and women, and labelled feminism and the Women's Movement when it emerged in the West as a 'bourgeois ideology, which was to fragment the common class interests of men and women' (Šiklová 1999a, 132).¹¹ However, pre-state-socialist gender relations

¹⁰ The emphasis on so-called working class values is documented, for example, by the way the CVs of the newly honoured 'Heroes of Socialist Work', a ceremony performed traditionally at the occasion of the May Day, were crafted for the newspapers. In 1987, the *Rudé právo* (the official Party daily) published biographies of the thirteen people awarded the title 'Hero of Socialist Work'. The brief biographies usually *start* by declaring the person's working-class or peasant origin, then summarise his or her working-class or agricultural career and conclude with his or her political activities. A higher-education degree is listed for two of them (incidentally, one of them a woman-scientist, the only academically-oriented person among the group, but also first identified as of 'working-class origin') (n.a. 1987a).

As to the symbolic value of the—consumer—West: throughout my childhood experience, the hierarchy among children at school was established, to a large extent, by their access to Western goods—not just to any goods. Adults would go and visit each other in order to see (not always the latest) *Neckermann* or *Quelle* catalogues, or leaf through copies of the *Burda* and the *Neue Mode* discarded by exile relatives. The content of these catalogues and magazines constituted the image of the West for us, and we looked at it from our egalitarian ideological position and thought that this was what everybody had and could afford in that beautiful world—from our point of view—*behind* the Iron Curtain. Roumiana Deltcheva makes a similar observation in her analysis of a Hungarian and a Bulgarian film from the 1980s: 'the Western cultural centre is activated to act as a politically subversive mechanism. Every instance of appropriation of a cultural artefact from the West European and North American semiosphere—music, literature, pop culture—acquires symbolic significance beyond its merely decorative function' (Deltcheva 1999). For comparison, one of the articles covering the Gorbachevs' visit to Czechoslovakia in 1987 denies the information published in some Western press that Gorbachev was hesitant about visiting the country due to differences of opinion between the Soviet and the Czechoslovak Communist Parties. The article places the word 'bourgeois' in the following context: 'The wave of speculations, which filled the news reporting of many bourgeois papers over the last few days, is in this sense indeed a textbook example of "seriousness" of bourgeois journalism' (Rovenský 1987).

¹¹ This is, of course, in itself a very complex argument and I will consider at least some aspects of it throughout this study.

did not disappear with state-socialist ideology, but necessarily continued in the thinking of individuals and, particularly, within the private sphere.¹² Katrin Sieg presents the same argument concerning the relation between gender and ideology in the GDR: 'while the market and the law recognise no difference between the genders, the home is characterised by a sexual division of labour familiar from other, nonsocialist societies' (Sieg 1995, 106). Raymond Williams argued that 'there can be areas of experience [the dominant social order] is willing to ignore or dispense with: to assign as private or to specialise as aesthetic or to generalise as natural.' However, he immediately qualifies this statement:

In advanced capitalism, because of changes in the social character of labour, in the social character of communications, and in the social character of decision-making, the dominant culture reaches much further than ever before in capitalist society into hitherto 'reserved' or 'resigned' areas of experience and practice and meaning. The area of effective penetration of the dominant order into the whole social and cultural process is thus now significantly greater. (Williams 1977, 125–26)

Yet, it is perhaps safe to extend Williams's theory to state socialism, because the changes in social relations, about which he speaks, apply to that social order, too. Family structures and relations were conserved in social consciousness and practice from the pre-state-socialist times, because the state-socialist ideology proclaimed the family sphere private. Family members could then behave in the 'official emancipated' way in the public sphere, while continuing patriarchal structures and roles at home.¹³ Chris Corrin lists six reasons why Central/Eastern European women remained second-class citizens even during state socialism. Among them are:

The minimal restructuring of family units and the backward-looking attitude towards women's unpaid work underpinning 'socialist' development in much the same way as it did within capitalist development.

The survival and reinforcement of traditional values and attitudes of male supremacy. The domestic division of labour was not problematised, and state forces became paternal 'protectors' of women, 'allowing' them certain rights. (Corrin 1992, 18-19)

At the same time, however, given the ideological promotion of the equality of the sexes and the entry of most women into the workplace, we can hardly claim that family relations remained unaffected.¹⁴ Moreover, although the family was supposedly a private realm, the state still regulated some of its practices through institutions to a varying extent in different stages of state socialism—it was 'the foundation of the State', after all (as referred to, for example by the then Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec in his speech at the occasion of International Women's Day—Adamec 1989a)—and, most importantly, the official rhetoric frequently emphasised the role of the mother, but not so much of the father.¹⁵

¹² Václav Havel acknowledged the inferior status of women when, in his New Year's presidential address, set as his task to support 'everything that will lead to the improvement of the position of children, elderly people, women, the sick, people employed in hard physical labour, members of ethnic minorities, and all other citizens who are for various reasons worse off than others' (Havel 1991).

¹³ Havelková (1995, 30) makes a similar claim.

¹⁴ *Statistická ročenka Československé socialistické republiky 1987 (Statistical Yearbook of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic 1987)* records that women represented 46.3 percent of all employed people in the Czech Republic. The number does not include women on maternity leave (*Statistická ročenka 1988*).

¹⁵ Myra Marx Ferree develops a theory of different patriarchies in the two German states prior to German unification: 'The distinction between public and private patriarchy rests fundamentally on the role of the state as either supplanting or supporting the conventional authority and practical power of

This is only a part of the problem affecting the representations of women in the texts I will be discussing. Another dimension will be added if we consider the possible *resistant* function of the patriarchal discourse, more precisely, the discourse of femininity, in relation to the dominant state-socialist ideology (I will be looking at this issue in detail in Chapter 4). I will start with Žižek's argument against the understanding of ideology as an imagined representation of reality. He says that the content of ideology could be 'true', but based on a false premise:

An ideology is thus not necessarily 'false': as to its positive content, it can be 'true', quite accurate, since what really matters is not the asserted content as such, but *the way this content is related to the subjective position implied by its own process of enunciation*. We are within ideological space proper the moment this content—'true' or 'false' (if true, so much the better for the ideological effect)—is functional with regard to some relation of social domination ('power', 'exploitation') in an inherently non-transparent way: *the very logic of legitimising the relation of domination must remain concealed if it is to be effective*. In other words, the starting point of the critique of ideology has to be full acknowledgement of the fact that it is easily possible to *lie in the guise of truth*. (Žižek 1994, 8; original emphasis)

What this means in the conditions of state socialism is that, for example, the struggle of the working class was 'true' in the sense that it was politically necessary in a socially unjust system, but that the ideology of the leadership of the working class proclaimed falsely the historical role of the proletariat. The ideology could maintain its power as long as the logic of the assumption of the historical role was unchallenged.

We can draw a parallel also with patriarchal ideology: as long as the assumption of the woman's 'natural' place at home went unquestioned, the representations of women doing housework (whether in literature, popular culture, the media, or law) were real or 'true' enough. Janice Winship is one of the theorists pointing to this quality of ideology in patriarchy in her analysis of 'colour' magazines. According to her, these magazines belong to the sphere of leisure, while the 'black-and-white' variety like *The Economist* or the *Spectator* are associated with everyday work. However, women's pleasure and positions in this work/leisure dichotomy is different from that of men:

Symbolically women are men's leisure, to which the 'girlie' magazines are sad witness. Women personify eroticism, leisure and pleasure. They are, in most men's imagination, the ultimate commodity to be 'enjoyed', the 'commodity' which is so often sold in ads. [...] Yet for women themselves that private sphere has always meant domestic work—to say nothing of many women's additional public and paid work. (Winship 1987b, 54)

the individual male as household head. The state socialism of east Germany (German Democratic Republic, GDR) supplanted the individual male head and thus embodied principles of public patriarchy; the state policies undergirding the social market economy of West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany, FRG) are, in contrast, strongly oriented to sustaining private patriarchy' (Ferree 2001, 512).

Mothers under state socialism possessed a certain political power. An environmental NGO called Prague Mothers, for example, demonstrated during a meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the neighbouring countries held from 28 to 30 May 1989 at the invitation of the Czechoslovak Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec. One of the leading activists of the organisation at the time responded to my inquiry with the following words: 'The Prague Mothers held a demonstration for the improvement of the environment in the morning of 29 May. Thus, the pedestrian zone [in the Prague city centre] saw historically the first demonstrators: mothers with prams. The demonstrators were atypical and all the more feared: water cannons and other means of police repression could not be used.'

For women, work connected with keeping a house is not work, 'because [it is] about being a woman' (Winship 1987b, 54). At this point Winship recalls John Berger's phrase: 'Men act and women appear' (Berger 1972, 47). She explains that the work women do to be women, 'to appear', must be hidden, because they are there to be enjoyed by men, while (men's) 'actions' happen through work. Keeping a home, being attractive and so on come 'naturally' to women.

A complication emerges with this theoretical standpoint, if we try to extend it to the state-socialist context best illustrated by the grossly exaggerated Western stereotype of an Eastern European woman on a tractor. I come from a fairly rural part of the Czech Republic. The house in which I lived throughout the 1970s and 80s was in the vicinity of a co-operative farm, my father often brought me along to his work in various agricultural enterprises, and, as a student, I was obliged to go regularly and 'help out' the socialist economy by working in menial agricultural jobs. Yet, with the exception of a milking apparatus, I have not seen a woman operate any kind of agricultural machinery in my life. I have, then, a reason to believe that this image is false—at least when we consider the subject of my theoretical interest: the Czech Republic in the 1980s. However, the image of the woman tractor driver draws on a rather real ('true') content of the state-socialist ideology, which emphasised the importance of women in building socialism, that is, their participation in the creation of a public good, rather than their role in the private sphere of the household. This is at least partially evidenced by the strict referencing to female individuals as 'comrades', and addressing them that way in all official contexts, rather than using the marital status of 'Mrs.' and 'Miss' throughout the state-socialist period until the 1989 changeover.

The false premise of this ideology was the concept of public good in the state socialist rhetoric: the inefficiency in distributing and creating public good by the State became increasingly obvious and therefore less effective. The breaking point in the public trust in the premises of the ideology occurred probably in 1968 following the violent suppression of the Prague Spring: literary and non-literary accounts of excited young builders of dams and factories appear before that time, not after. By the 1980s, the ideology became something that had to be obeyed, but which, by that time also became transparent in its falseness. Havel writes in his open letter to the then Czechoslovak president, Gustáv Husák, in 1975:

Yet somewhere under this cover, these conflicts and demands continue, grow, and multiply, only to burst forth when the moment arrives when *the cover can no longer hold them down*. This is the moment when the dead weight of inertia crumbles and history steps out again into the arena. (Havel 1992a, 76; my emphasis)

He is not referring explicitly to the disclosure of the false premise of the ideology, but it can be said that he reveals that same mechanism, and claims that that is the state to which Czech reality arrived. Under this 'bleak sky boredom and mortifying eventlessness' (Havel 1991), the atmosphere of indifference and stifled emotions, claiming womanhood and its 'natural' attributes including the emphasis on feminine beauty and the housework by women themselves can be seen as an act of resistance against the ideology of the State. It enabled women to distance themselves from the forced role ascribed to them by the State. By definition, femininity as defined in the above argument by Winship could not be understood as 'natural' from the point of view of state-socialist ideology, because it had to be reclaimed.

Thus, at the same time as possibly being a challenge to the dominant state-socialist ideology from one perspective, women's claims to traditional womanhood also confirmed the 'naturalness' of the woman's place in the home from the standpoint of the residual patriarchal discourse. It is then probably impossible to determine, whether, for example, a representation of the role of the woman in a household is only a manifestation of the residual patriarchy in the discourse or whether and to what extent it stems from resistance against the dominant state-socialist ideology.

We can argue that the family as an institution was legitimised by the State and thus perpetuating patriarchal ideology. However, it is much harder to maintain that the ideology of the State was in agreement with patriarchal ideology. I showed that, certainly in some aspects, the two ideologies ran against each other. The fact that patriarchal relationships were present in texts (and in reality), as I will show in an example below, suggests that patriarchy did not operate as an ideology, but again as a discourse (residual in its nature): its power did not originate from any particular institutions and concrete structures, but was omnipresent (Foucault 1990, 93). Both the resistant and the residual discourses are present alongside the dominant ideology in the texts of the state-socialist period. They create a complex theoretical situation, which, in our case, manifests itself in the texts by the multiplicity—and, possibly, a clash—of discourses.

The following passage from Zdena Frýbová's novel *For Unknown Reasons* (1993; first published 1988) illustrates well the struggle of ideologies / discourses on the description of the relation to housework of Irena, mother of Anka, the heroine:

He knew from Eva that Irena was already thirty seven. And yet, two hours after he met her, he knew that he would reach out for this woman not as for something marginal in his life—as was the case of Eva—but as for a real partner. She attracted him the way few women have. He even tried to fathom what could possibly attract this relaxed, witty, and charming woman to her husband, that man with the face and the body of a farmer [...] His admiration for Irena reached its climax when he understood that she was fascinated by her profession. He did not consider it exceptional in her husband or in men in general, but to find a woman excited by her work ... [...] But their whole house was tidy to perfection, the household was obviously working without a hitch ...

'May I ask you how you manage your household duties and childcare on top of your work ...?'

'I don't manage much and I don't care much. Only, I like to cook. Otherwise ... management skills are the answer. I always order major clean up from the communal services and we hired Mrs. Bošková, a pensioner from the neighbourhood, for the regular cleaning. Anička is a help rather than that I have to take care of her. You know, Marek, family and household are not such burdens as women make of them.'

An ideal, *ideal* woman, Marek was fascinated. A beautiful, exceptional woman. A living example that everything can be done even without rushing out of work the second the clock strikes three. (Frýbová 1993, 22–23; original emphasis)

We can read this passage from both perspectives discussed above and both interpretations are at play at the same time. Irena is shown as an efficient woman professional: no doubt is cast throughout the novel on her professional equality to her husband (for example, it is never said whose position at the workplace was higher in the company hierarchy, on the contrary, Irena and her husband always speak as 'we' working together on a project). The housework she does is something extra, on top of her public role and not taken for granted. Her ability to be a professional *and* feminine

in the domestic sense makes her superior to other women, who are 'just' working. It is also significant that although the account is not free indirect discourse in the true sense, it is more or less focalised through the male character Marek that we are told about Irena's exceptionality, that is, it is he who notices her extraordinary performance in the household, rather than overlooking her feminine involvement as simply 'natural'.¹⁶

From the other perspective, however, we can perceive the position of guilt from which Irena speaks. She speaks to two men: her husband and Marek, her potential brother-in-law. It is in this context of being under the judging eyes of the two men that she has to excuse her devotion to her profession by possessing other characteristics to make up for this 'unfeminine' trait—although a highly commendable quality within the message of the novel criticising people's indifference and exploitative attitude to their jobs as we will see in further examples. Later in the novel Anka, Irena's daughter, takes on the same characteristics as her mother: It is frequently stressed about her how she never fusses too much about having to do housework, yet her household is impeccable, and she cooks elaborate meals while spending more than the mandatory eight hours at work and loves it. Anka becomes a remarkable chef at the age of nineteen. She takes after her mother also in the outstanding beauty, perfect bodily properties, and overall physical attractiveness.¹⁷ Again, as in the case of Irena, the reader is given endless descriptions of Anka demonstrating these skills and physical qualities in front of her male colleagues from work, while at the same time, she is becoming a triumphant researcher, as if her professional enthusiasm had to be excused by her domestic brilliance.

Another difficulty is introduced into the interpretation of the text by the female sex of the author. The statements within the text which already are ambiguous due to the problem of the complex ideological/discursive situation, acquire further possible meanings and effects by the uncertain position of the woman-writer in relation to her gender.¹⁸ In that light and considering discourse theory we can read the appraisal of Irena discussed earlier neither as resistance to the dominant ideology, nor as a validation of residual patriarchal norms, but as an expression of the resistant voice of the woman-author. By putting the words of praise for domestic accomplishments into the mouth of a male character, the author may be producing what is repressed in the dominant discourse: a legitimisation of woman's work in the home. Sara Mills (1997, 88) argues in her readings of nineteenth-century conduct literature for women that the existence of that literature did not reflect the role of women at the time, but that the proliferation of these texts testified to the exact opposite: that women did not live up to the standards prescribed in the conduct books. The example in *For Unknown Reasons* may be

¹⁶ For an account of narrative voices see Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 109–16).

¹⁷ A puzzling point in the characteristics of these two 'superwomen' is the fact that Irena is a bad mother and Anka refuses to have children. I will discuss the implications of this incongruity in the construction of the ideal of femininity in Chapters 4 and 6.

Interestingly, though, if a female character is presented as flawed or entirely despicable morally or professionally, her appearance and culinary skills are either not discussed, or the woman's cooking is bad and her appearance is unappealing. That's the case of the mother of Anka's husband, or Irena's sister Eva whose only aim in life seems to be to marry Marek, for which effort she is constantly ridiculed by the narrator and by Marek and Anka.

¹⁸ In 1994–95 I was a member of a research team interviewing women for a international project focusing on women living in transitional societies. In our sample of forty interviews, we almost invariably revealed the difficulty of our respondents to relate themselves to their gender: they would say, for example, that they felt equal, but a few questions later they would contradict themselves by stating that women were disadvantaged in Czech society, or they would insist that women are just as good as men in professions, but if asked about their preferences in the workplace, they would declare their preference for male colleagues and, if they were in a managerial position, they preferred hiring men (Šmejkalová et al. unpublished).

another instance of this phenomenon. Czech men did not, as a rule, value domestic work by women, but the author expressed her wish for men being so observant as to notice and appreciate housework. Nevertheless, given the non-existence of any public discussion of women's issues in the Czech Republic at the time, it is quite possible that the author is not resisting, but is simply being prescriptive about the 'proper' image of femininity as defined by a patriarchal society. It can be argued that this difficulty is caused again by the residual discourse of patriarchy in state-socialist society.

The text of the novel contains all the conflicts of the ideological/discursive environment argued so far. On the one hand, the values of the dominant, state-socialist ideology are inscribed clearly in the novel in the approving tone of the narrator. But on the other hand, the novel offers occasional glimpses of the values of the resistant consumer capitalist discourse to the reader to please, to win him or her over. This binary is then further complicated by the presence of, or resistance to—it is sometimes hard to decide which—the patriarchal discourse. The voice of the dominant ideology as well as of the resistant discourse(s) are heard simultaneously, particularly in the representations of the capitalist West and the state-socialist East.

As most of the characters are scientists, they go to conferences and on research trips all over the world. That is the space in which the Czech environment meets the East and West. Interestingly, there are no characters from the Third World. The researchers from the East, who get at least episodic attention are only Soviets; Westerners are recruited only from Germany, the United States, Britain and France. This geographical distribution of characters is remarkable in that it represents precisely and only the countries which mattered politically in the rhetoric of the state-socialist ideology. Among those, the French characters, particularly professor Henri Dutourd, represent the 'nicer' side of the West, paralleling the political relations of Czechoslovakia to France, a country with a certain socialist orientation. France was the only Western country with which Czechoslovakia kept livelier cultural and academic exchange and which received somewhat positive coverage in the Czechoslovak press. Henri Dutourd is described as an honest and enthusiastic researcher who gives priority to his academic work above lucrative jobs in the cosmetics industry, and he is also a devoted and principled father and husband. He embraces the 'correct' moral values promoted by the state-socialist ideology, but at the same time, the reader is offered glimpses of the myth of 'the Golden West' constituting a part of the resistant discourse through Henri Dutourd: the professor's hard work is rewarded by the Nobel Prize, an upper middle class living standard and travel around the world—a dream of many a Czech in the past when no matter how hard one worked, a living standard allowing financial independence and unrestricted travel was usually impossible. Odila, Henri Dutourd's wife, is also usually mentioned together with him; she is always there, always a part of Henri's life.

The last characteristic, the inclusion of the wife in a man's life, is missing when Eastern, that is Soviet, characters enter the scene. Professor Kuzněcov is portrayed as a striking, even if not entirely likeable, figure, and no shadow of doubt is cast on his moral integrity or professional capacity, even if it is said about him that he was rather pigheaded in his research pursuits. The reader, however, is offered only the professional side of professor Kuzněcov, his family life is not mentioned. This again mirrors the social situation in Czechoslovakia before 1990: wives and families were never made visible in the lives of state representatives, they were left out of the public discourse, their role within the traditional (patriarchal) order had no place in the representations of the public sphere.¹⁹ For a Czech reader, Odila Dutourd is thus potentially another agent of resistance to the dominant ideology: her role of mother and wife in the life of her husband is fully recognised. It is hard to label her character as non-feminist, even: from the position of an ordinary Czech woman, who had to work, because her family could not survive on just the husband's income, and who was often seen merely in her labour force capacity by the dominant ideology, but who also had to work the second shift at home and was still expected to be the supportive wife, the lack of public recognition for the latter two 'jobs' had perhaps the same significance as the exclusion from the public sphere had for Western feminists.

Apart from Henri Dutourd, most other Western researchers are seen as morally warped. We could say that this was exactly in the vein of Lenin's characterisation of capitalism as 'parasitic and decaying' (Lenin 1998). Arthur Casey, an American scientist from Yale and the most outstanding example of the supposed Western decadence, is described at length as a brilliant academic, but as an immoral and ill-mannered man. In this description, women and the relation to them often become the currency, by which Casey—and the West—are evaluated: the narrator and other characters give accounts of Casey's four divorces and preference for young attractive women, who he appreciates only for their sexual qualities and appearance. He enjoys offending everybody around him and can only think of women in terms of whether they are worth sleeping with, while it is explicitly not pleasure for which he is looking, but sexual exploitation and dominance. This is also his reaction to meeting Anka at the congress in Perth:

As Casey was getting going, doctor Berková seemed to him more and more acceptable—that bitch is maybe even prettier than Sue, he admitted unwillingly a comparison with his latest twenty-year old wife. [...] Casey, who already co-opted Anka into his so-called favour as a strong and interesting opponent, reflected that it would not be bad to take this arrogant slut to bed. (Frýbová 1993, 428)

It is hard to interpret the significance of what is being said here: on the one hand, it seems that the writer working from within the state-socialist ideology, uses the same sign system for communicating moral corruption, as would have been used in any traditional capitalist concept, while on the other hand, we can argue that this value system is precisely the result of both state socialism and consumer capitalism existing within similar patriarchal discourses.²⁰

¹⁹ Raisa Gorbacheva became the first leading politician's wife in the Eastern block since Nina Khrushcheva who accompanied her husband on state visits. This fact was frequently stressed by various authors. For example, by Larissa Vasilieva in her journalistic account of several of Soviet politicians' wives (Vasilieva 1994), or in articles reporting the death of Raisa Gorbacheva of leukaemia in September 1999 (Bohlen 1999; n.a. 1999; Rybář 1999).

²⁰ The comment on the sameness of sign systems was made by my supervisor, Lynne Pearce, during an early draft of this paper.

Despite the fact that the novel is poorly written and has a schematic structure of a 'failed' romance, it is a very complex text from the point of view of ideology and discourses co-existing in it.²¹ It demonstrates that, in our case, every critique of representations of gender relations, has to take into consideration the positioning of those representations within the environment of dominant ideology and residual/emergent resistant discourse, while that is further complicated by the relation to the residual patriarchal discourse. Thus, an image displaying patriarchal stereotypes from the point of view of Western theory, which was developed in the environment of consumer capitalism, may also contain elements of resistance to the gender stereotypes or values of the ideology of state socialism. However, the subjecting discourse, in that same case, may indeed be the patriarchal one, because it was still present as a residual discourse during the period of state socialism.

Already in the few passages presented here, we can see the resistance of the text to any tidy theoretical interpretation: as if the text were interrogated by its own contradictions, statements are made and not only do they have *several* effects, but also contradictory effects. The representations present in the text, seem to show that the particular structuring of discourses and of the ideology allowed the 'subjects' (and 'readers') various negotiations with the dominant structures during state socialism: the inter-relatedness of the ideology and of the discourses created an environment which defied tightly closed boundaries. The ideology and each discourse always opened up a space for resistance against one of them, often by allowing an escape into another, thus the positioning of a subject (and reader) can be seen, at the same time, as complying with *and* resisting the existing structures.

In the rest of this study, I will be discussing the gender implications of the ideological/discursive model I presented in this chapter in selected Czech fiction (also in *For Unknown Reasons*) and in other cultural products, such as, billboards and journalism. One chapter, Chapter 7, will look at a different discourse of gender (or, as I will argue, 'genderlessness') as an example of a way of thinking outside the dichotomy of masculine/feminine. I will also suggest that the formation of that discourse was aided by another dichotomy: that of the state-socialist/capitalist.

²¹ For a discussion of a 'failed' romance see (Radway 1994b). I will be discussing this issue in the case of *For Unknown Reasons* in Chapter 6.